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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of three child care studies in the Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties of Michigan. In the first study parents were surveyed to determine their child care needs versus the needs met by child care centers. Data was collected from seven child care centers: two franchise, three private, and two in-home. The conclusions from this study are that a well-trained staff and interaction with other children were the most important issues to parents. The purpose of the second study was to define the ways in which child care in the Metro Detroit area was being met. Data was collected from 100 early childhood centers and 13 Detroit area child care directors. The findings of this survey indicate that local centers are not providing services for parents who must work unusual shifts or weekends and who have children under two and a half years of age. The third study gathered data from 57 workers of public school pre-school, public day care and private nursery school programs. The purpose was to compare the responses of the staff in different areas. The conclusions of this study are that the private nursery school staff was the most satisfied group among those surveyed and that private nursery schools and public school preschools were comprised of highly educated, more mature and experienced staff. (RJC)

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A Look at Child Care
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Abstract

Oakland University graduate students enrolled in an early childhood administration class worked in groups to investigate 1) the needs of parents, 2) programs offered, and 3) the attitudes of staff in the Tri-County area of Michigan (Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties). Each group collected data by means of a questionnaire. Results from each survey follow along with recommendations for child care program coordinators and staff, parents, and employers.

A Look at Child Care
In a Northern Industrial State

Oakland University graduate students enrolled in an early childhood administration class worked in groups to investigate 1) the needs of parents, 2) programs offered, and 3) the attitudes of staff in the Tri-County area of Michigan (Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties).

Parent Needs

The purpose of this study was to survey parents regarding their child care needs versus the needs met by child care centers today. Data was collected from seven child care centers: two franchise, three private, two in-home. The questionnaire distributed to parents appears in Appendix A. Results follow.

Franchise Day Care:

The majority of families who answered this questionnaire had only one child attending the center. The majority of the children were under four years of age. All children except one were first in birth order.

The majority of households reported an income of between 50,000 and 70,000 dollars. Only one child was from a single parent family. All families were well informed about the types of services this center provides: full day, half day, drop in and latch key. The majority of children were in the full day program.

Findings indicate that all families were not aware that Kinder-Care provides transportation. One family indicated that it would benefit from this service.

Findings indicate that families overwhelmingly chose this center for the following reasons: 1) after a visit to the center, 2) the center was close to school or work, or 3) because there was an opening.

Only four of the families surveyed indicated that they would be able to volunteer some of their time at the center. One parent is employed in this center and receives a subsidy; her children attend this center and she is able to be with them throughout the day.

Parents were asked to rank six items in order of importance. The results follow. Responses selected first: well trained staff and interaction with other children. Responses selected second were: play activities, well trained staff, and interaction with other children. The response selected third was a well trained staff. Fourth, parents chose play activities and equipment. Fifth, parents chose parent involvement and academics. Sixth, parents chose equipment.

Almost all of the families expressed interest in weekend care, overnight care, and care during a child's illness.

Franchise Day Care:

Sixteen families responded to the parent questionnaire. Fourteen families indicated that one of their children attend the Center; two families each had two children enrolled. The majority of these children were four or five. The breakdown in age was as follows: nine 1st born, one middle child, five last in birth order, two families with only one child.

Two thirds of the households in this study reported an

income of 50,000 dollars and above per year. Of the two single parents in this group, one gave no income information and the other reported income of between 10,000 and 19,000 dollars per year.

On the whole, parents were well informed about services provided at this center: full day, half day, drop in, and latch key. Fourteen families indicated that their children attend a full day. While Kinder-Care does provide transportation for half day and latch key kindergartners, no transportation is provided for other preschoolers. Of the four families who answered that no transportation was provided, three felt that they would indeed benefit from this service.

Families chose this child care center for the following reasons: 1) the center was close to home; 2) chose after visiting the center; 3) the center was close to school or work. Only one parent was subsidized by an employer. Only one parent was referred by a Resource and Referral service.

Two families indicated availability for volunteer work in this Center for two to three hours per month.

Parents were asked to rank six items in order of their importance in a Child Care environment. The results follow. The responses selected first were: a well trained staff and interaction with other children. Responses selected second: play activities and interaction with children. Thirdly, play activities. Fourth: academics and interaction with children. The fifth and sixth most popular choices selected were equipment and parent involvement.

Half of the parent respondents indicated an interest in care during a child's illness.

Private Montessori Center

Twelve families responded to the parent questionnaire. All respondents had one child enrolled. The majority of these children were four years of age. The breakdown in age was as follows: eight 1st born, three last in birth order, one family with an only child.

Incomes were evenly distributed between 10,000 and 60,000 dollars per year. The majority of incomes fell in the 40,000 to 49,000 dollar range.

Two respondents were single parents. One parent fell in the 10,000 to 19,000 dollar category, one fell in the 50,000 to 59,000 dollar category.

Parents were well informed about services provided by this center. Many respondents expressed an interest in transportation as this small private center is unable to provide this service.

Three quarters of the respondents indicated that their children are enrolled in a full day program. One quarter indicated that their children are enrolled for half a day.

Parents indicated their reasons for choosing this center: 1) after a visit, 2) the center was close to home, 3) a friend or relative's child attended.

Two respondents indicated availability to volunteer time in this center, one for 6 hours per month, the other for 12 hours per month.

Parents were asked to rank six items in order of importance

in a Child Care environment. The results follow. The response selected first was a well trained staff. The responses selected second were: play activities, academics, well trained staff. Third: academics and play activities. Fourth: interaction with other children. Fifth and sixth: equipment and parent involvement.

Parents expressed the need for child care on the weekend and during a child's illness.

Private Day Care and Private Nursery School

There were twenty-one responses to the parent questionnaire. Ten of them came from a day care center and eleven from a nursery school. There was one response from a single parent, twenty from two-parent families. All of the responding parents had incomes between 50,000 and 60,000 dollars. Six responding parents had two children enrolled, the others had one child enrolled.

The majority of the parents, both from the day care and the nursery, were not interested in having transportation provided for their children. Sick child care was the additional service of interest to five of the respondents.

Most of the parents chose the program or center because: 1) it was close to home, 2) it was recommended by a friend or relative, or 3) they had made a visitation.

Question nine, the ranking of parental goals for the respondents children, can be viewed in several ways. First, an overall picture. Responses selected first and second were (1) a well trained staff, (2) the opportunity for interaction with other children. Responses selected fifth and sixth were, (5) the

opportunity for parent involvement, (6) equipment. Secondly, the parents from the day care center listed these responses, (1) a well trained staff, (2) an academic atmosphere, (5) equipment, (6) opportunity for parental involvement. Thirdly, the parents from the nursery school listed these responses, (1) the opportunity for interaction with other children, (2) a well trained staff, (5) equipment, and (6) an academic atmosphere.

It is interesting to note that the parents at the day care center listed an academic atmosphere as second. This center has a play-based program. It is always referred to as play-based. Perhaps the parents see the children learning many 'academic' skills or concepts while experiencing play.

In-home Day Care

There were 15 questionnaires distributed among three in-home child care centers. There were zero questionnaires returned from one center. The researcher was informed that the provider went great lengths to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and stress the anonymity of the respondents. The provider, on three separate occasions, gave parents the time and the privacy to complete the questionnaires yet these parents did not cooperate. The response in the two remaining centers was more successful.

The families who responded to the questionnaire were from middle-class, two-parent households. While these centers offered a variety of programs most children attended full time. None of the centers offer transportation, nor did the parents in this area appear to need this service. Most respondents chose their child's center because 1) it was close to home, 2) there was an

opening, and 3) they reached a decision after a visitation. These families are not able to volunteer at their centers.

Conclusions

A well trained staff was the most important issue for the families, along with interaction with other children. Equipment and opportunity for parent interaction were the least important to these parents. This researcher concludes that parents do not place importance in parental involvement as there are few ways to become involved in this type of setting.

Only two parents responded that they needed care for their children during illness; this low rate of response was surprising to this researcher.

Recommendations

Research clearly indicates the need for sick child care, weekend care, and extended care. The facilities surveyed by these researchers are not currently satisfying these needs. This panel of researchers recommends that child care providers, in general, should facilitate parents' needs during these times.

Research shows that involvement is low on the list of parents' priorities. Research also shows that children of parents who are involved in center activities excel. Therefore, it is recommended that employers grant parents time to find an appropriate center for their child's needs. Furthermore, employers must provide more flexible hours in order that mothers and fathers may spend time participating in center activities.

Survey results indicate that parents are confused about the issues involved in quality care. Most child care experts include

the following components in their descriptions of quality care:

1) Developmentally appropriate curriculum.
2) Low adult/child ratio.
3) Staff trained in early childhood development.
4) Strong Continuing Education program for staff.
5) Strong partnership between family and teacher.
6) Developmentally appropriate method of evaluating children.

Programs

The purpose of this study was to define how the need for child care in the Metro Detroit area is being met. Over 100 early childhood centers were surveyed in order to discover the various schedules and types of programs currently available (Michigan Department of Social Services Directory of Child Care Centers, 1988).

Additionally, the directors of 13 Detroit area child care centers were interviewed to obtain more specific information about their child care facilities. Of the 13 centers extensively questioned, one was a franchise operation, four were part of a community education program, and eight were small, privately owned facilities. The questionnaire distributed to these centers appears in Appendix B.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Outstanding needs not met by these facilities:

1) Parents who work during the summer months.
2) Parents who need child care during the weekend.

Insert Table 3 about here

Outstanding needs not met by these facilities:

1) Parents whose jobs begin before 6:00 am or after 6:30 pm.

Insert Table 4 about here

Outstanding needs not met:

1) Where do working parents go with toddlers?

This study shows the following requirements for staff:

Director: 69% require a Bachelor's degree in Education
23% require a two year degree

Teacher: 54% require a Bachelor's degree
15% require a two year degree

32% require less than two years of college

Few teaching assistants have had formal early childhood training; most are inexperienced and lack the proper understanding of early childhood development required to implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Employers offer very low wages to these inexperienced individuals and turnover is high. There is little incentive for such poorly paid staff to remain in such positions.

Other Findings

Programs associated with the local schools were able to provide special programs such as gym, music, science, field trips. Because of their access to public school busses, these programs do not pay high insurance rates such as those charged to private programs.

Recommendations

Child care for parents working odd hours should be financed by the employer responsible, or the employer should help employees find quality care close to the workplace.

The need for weekend care might be met by hospitals and retail businesses. These institutions could help this service as an employee benefit. More child "drop off" facilities such as KidStop and My Place would be helpful to all families.

Infant and Toddler care is currently prohibitively expensive and usually unprofitable for early childhood centers because of the required high adult/child ratio. Zoning laws need to be changed in order to better accommodate the needs of parents for infant and toddler care.

These researchers suggest mandatory certification for early childhood staff. The certification process would ensure that staff acquire a minimum amount of knowledge and experience.

The findings of this survey indicate that local centers are not providing services for parents who must work unusual shifts or weekends, and those with children under two and a half years of age. Drop-in facilities, on site child care, and in-home day care facilities are falling short of family needs.

Early childhood centers affiliated with either public school systems or franchise operations have a distinct advantage over privately owned facilities. These centers are able to offer transportation. Private facilities are unable to compete with the larger operations because of budget constraints and high insurance rates.

Attitudes of Staff

Data was gathered from three groups: public school pre-school, public day care and private nursery school programs. The purpose was to compare the responses of the staff in the areas of morale, on-going staff training, education, age, parent interaction, supplies and equipment, and the rating of curricula presently used. The questionnaire distributed to these groups appears in Appendix C.

Fifty-seven workers responded to the questionnaire: 11 from public school pre-school, 22 from public day care, and 23 from private nursery school programs. Responses to the survey may be seen visually in the graphs which follow.

Insert Table 5 about here

Insert Table 6 about here

All of the teachers in the public school and nursery school programs were college graduates; four teachers had Master's Degrees. Public day care programs tended to employ a greater percentage of teachers with less than a Bachelor's degree.

Insert Table 7 about here

In summary, all teachers in the public school preschools held either a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree. The majority of teachers were between 35 and 50 years of age, and most planned to remain in the early childhood field. Teachers liked their curricula yet felt they needed better equipment and more time for training.

Insert Table 8 about here

In summary, Only 5 of the 14 directors and teachers in the public day care programs were college graduates; none held Master's degrees. The median age of staff was between 25 and 35 years of age. Most respondents planned to remain in the early childhood field. Directors and teachers felt that the quality of their curricula and supplies was adequate but not outstanding.

Insert Table 9 about here

In summary, all the directors and teachers in the private nursery schools held an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree. The majority of staff was between 35 and 50 years of age. Most of these respondents planned to remain in the early childhood field. These directors and teachers felt that more time needed to be devoted to training. Data indicates a high level of satisfaction with equipment, supplies, and curricula.

Insert Table 10 about here

Conclusions

The private nursery school staff was the most satisfied group among those surveyed. Public preschools were rated adequate by respondents; public day care programs were rated

average.

Private nursery schools and public school preschools were comprised of highly educated, more mature and experienced staff. Public day care programs were generally staffed by individuals with less experience and education in the field of early childhood.

Recommendations

Public day care and franchise programs in particular need to train staff in appropriate early childhood practices. Workshops and seminars should be required for all staff members, no matter the age or background of experience. Perhaps early childhood centers might find funding for professional development from community groups or the local Chamber of Commerce. In turn, staff members might serve as consultants for local parent committees or local corporate sponsors.

Child care providers should be required to hold degrees in early childhood or at least be enrolled in an accredited program of early childhood education. It is not enough to hire high school graduates with baby sitting experience.

Early childhood centers implementing appropriate curricula for small children must rely on a multitude of supplies and equipment. Child care centers with a limited budget might again look to the community for assistance. Retail shops might offer free supplies in return for discounted child care consultation or services. Child care centers need to pursue the availability of free resources in the community. An enterprising individual will find free carpet scraps, wall paper samples, packing material,

computer paper, etc. -- a plethora of materials.

References

Michigan Department of Social Services Directory of Child Care Centers, Report Number CC-340, October 5, 1988, pp 343 - 363.

Appendix A

Parent Questionnaire

This form will be used to gather data for a county-wide survey of Early Childhood Centers. The data will be used by graduate students of Oakland University. Please take a few moments to fill out this form, and return it to this facility's staff in the plain envelope provided. This information will be anonymous and confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. How many of your children attend this program?
   How old is(are) your child(ren)?
   What is your child's birth order? ex: first, last, etc.
2. My household earns yearly : below $10,000___
   $10,000-$19,000____ $20,000-$29,000____ $30,000-$39,000___
   $40,000-$49,000____ $50,000-$59,000____ above $60,000___
3. Are you a single parent? (y/n)
4. This facility offers: (check all that apply)
   full day program____ half day____ drop in____ latchkey
5. My child attends:
   full day program____ half day____ drop in____ latchkey
6. Does this facility provide transportation? yes____ no
   If no, would you benefit from free transportation?
7. I chose this program because: (check all that apply)
   close to home
   close to work/school
   there was an opening
   it was in the phone book
   newspaper ad

a friend/relative's child attends
recommended by an acquaintance
employer subsidy
resource & referral(through employer)
made the decision after a visitation

8. How many hours of your time are you able to volunteer each month in this facility?
9. Rate your goals for your child in order of most important (1) to least important (6):
   play-oriented activities
   academic atmosphere
   well-trained staff
   opportunity for parent involvement
   opportunity for interaction with other children
   equipment
10. I need the following care: (check all that apply)
    week-end____ night____ during child's illness___
    extended 24-hour care___

Appendix B

Program Questionnaire

1. When is your facility open?
   a. Hours:
   b. Days of the Week
   c. Calendar year: _____ All year _____ School year only
2. Describe your curriculum
   a. Play-based
   b. Academic
   c. Mixed
   d. Other (specify)
3. Do you have a program for children who are:
   a. 2 weeks - 18 months old?
   b. 18 months - 2 1/2 years old?
   c. 2 1/2 - 6 years old?
   d. 6 years and older?
4. What are the educational requirements for staff members?
   a. Director:
   b. Teacher:
   c. Teaching Assistant:
5. Can uour facility accommodate special needs children?
6. Are there any special needs children currently enrolled?
7. Do you offer a before or after school (latch key) program?
8. Do you offer transportation betwwen your facility and the local elementary school?
   a. For latch key participants?
   b. For 1/2 day kindergarteners?

9. Does your summer program differ from your school year program? If so, how is it different?

10. Describe any "special" programs offered at your facility, such as foreign language, field trips, mother/tot classes, Mom's day out drop-in, gymnastics or dance.

Appendix C

Staff Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Graduate students from Oakland University intend to use this form to gather information about early childhood programs in Southeastern Michigan. Please return completed form to _____. Thank you.

DIRECTIONS:

The rating scale measures your satisfaction from low (one) to high (five). Please circle the number accordingly.

		Low				High
1.	How would you describe your relationship with your immediate supervisor?	1	2	3	4	5
2.	How would you rate the amount of time devoted to training?	1	2	3	4	5
3.	How would you rate the training?	1	2	3	4	5
4.	How would you rate the amount and quality of classroom equipment?	1	2	3	4	5
5.	How would you rate the amount and quality of classroom supplies?	1	2	3	4	5
6.	How often do you interact with parents?	1	2	3	4	5

7. How would you rate the curriculum that is used? 1 2 3 4 5

   Please describe briefly _____

   _____

8. What is your position? _____

9. Do you plan to stay in the field of early childhood? yes_____ no_____

Table 1

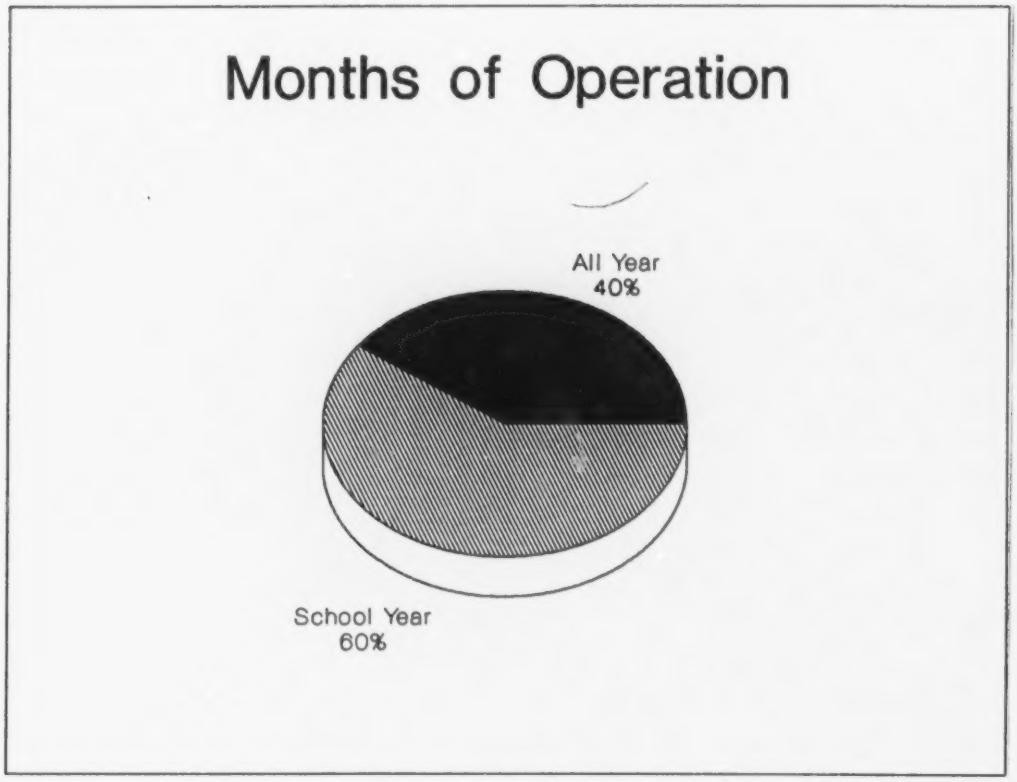


Table 2

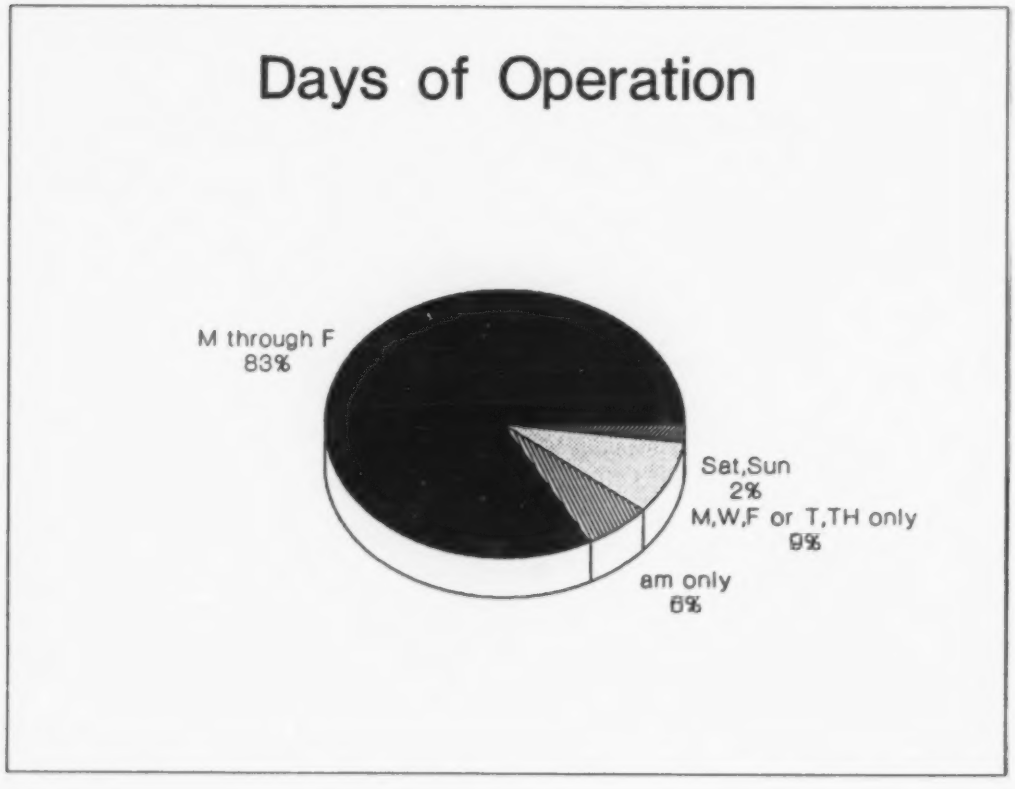

Days of Operation
M through F
83%
Sat,Sun
2%
M,W,F or T,TH only
9%
am only
6%

Table 3

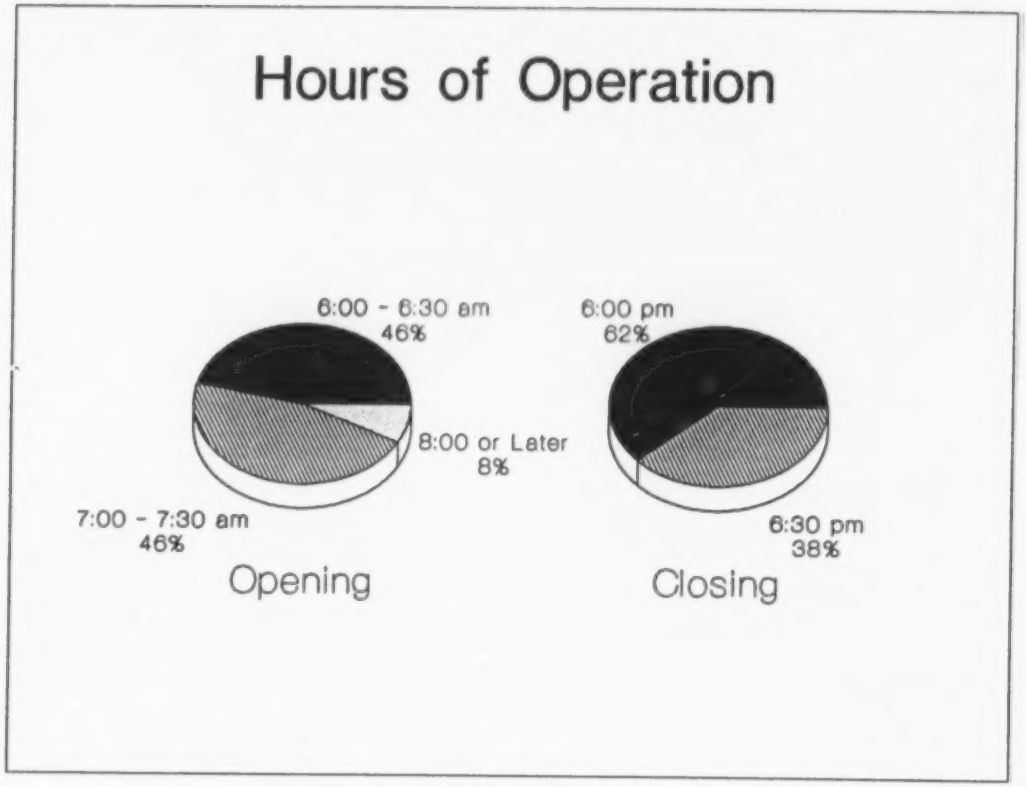

Hours of Operation
6:00 - 6:30 am
46%
8:00 or Later
8%
7:00 - 7:30 am
46%
Opening
6:00 pm
62%
6:30 pm
38%
Closing

Table 4

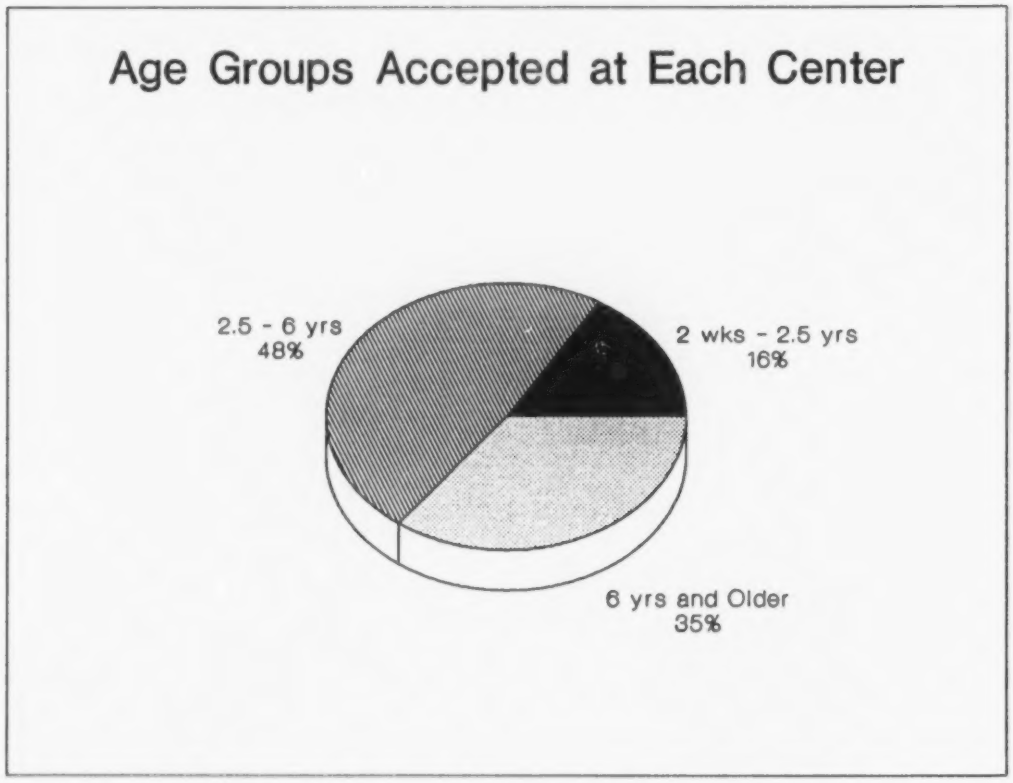

Age Groups Accepted at Each Center
2.5 - 6 yrs
48%
2 wks - 2.5 yrs
16%
6 yrs and Older
35%

Table 5

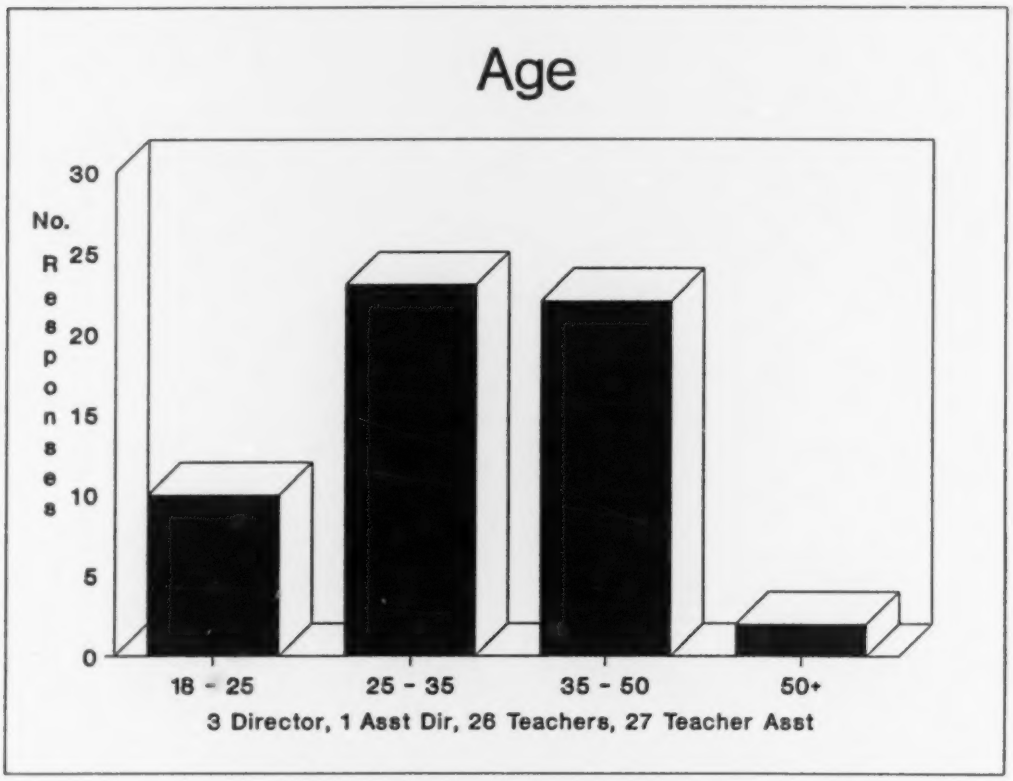

Age
No. Responses
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
18 - 25
25 - 35
35 - 50
50+
3 Director, 1 Asst Dir, 26 Teachers, 27 Teacher Asst

Table 6

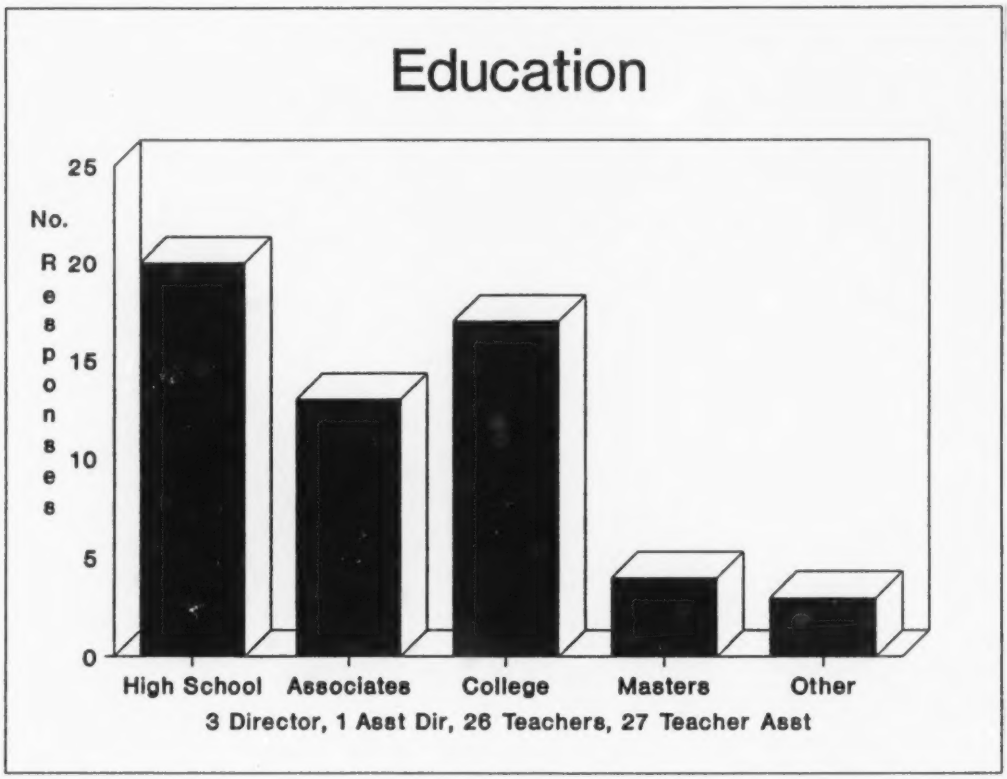

Education
No. Responses
25
20
15
10
5
0
High School
Associates
College
Masters
Other
3 Director, 1 Asst Dir, 26 Teachers, 27 Teacher Asst

Table 7

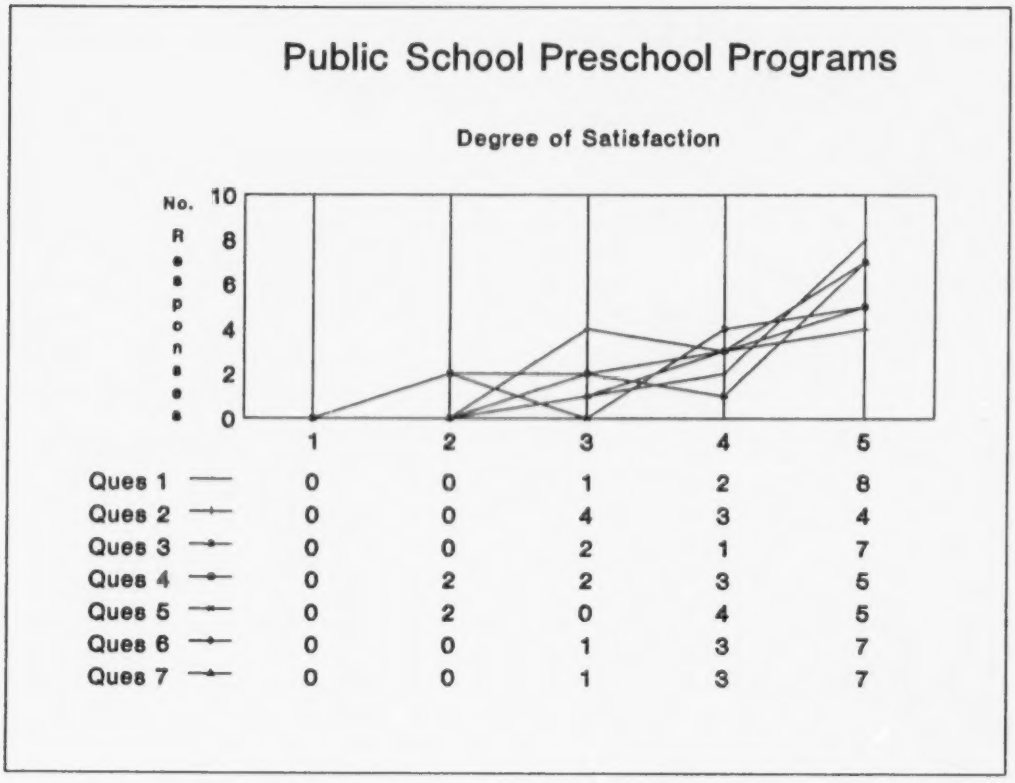

Public School Preschool Programs
Degree of Satisfaction
No. Responses
10
8
6
4
2
0
1
2
3
4
5
Ques 1 0 0 1 2 8
Ques 2 0 0 4 3 4
Ques 3 0 0 2 1 7
Ques 4 0 2 2 3 5
Ques 5 0 2 0 4 5
Ques 6 0 0 1 3 7
Ques 7 0 0 1 3 7

Table 8

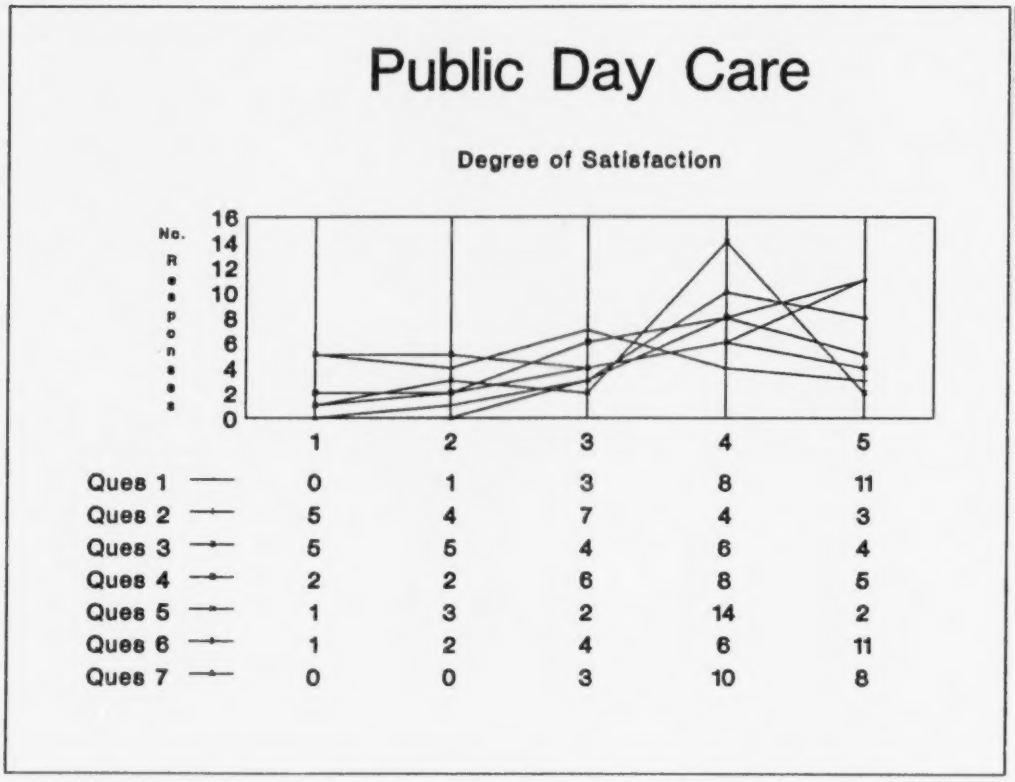

Public Day Care
Degree of Satisfaction
No. Responses
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
1
2
3
4
5
Ques 1 0 1 3 8 11
Ques 2 5 4 7 4 3
Ques 3 5 5 4 6 4
Ques 4 2 2 6 8 5
Ques 5 1 3 2 14 2
Ques 6 1 2 4 6 11
Ques 7 0 0 3 10 8

Table 9

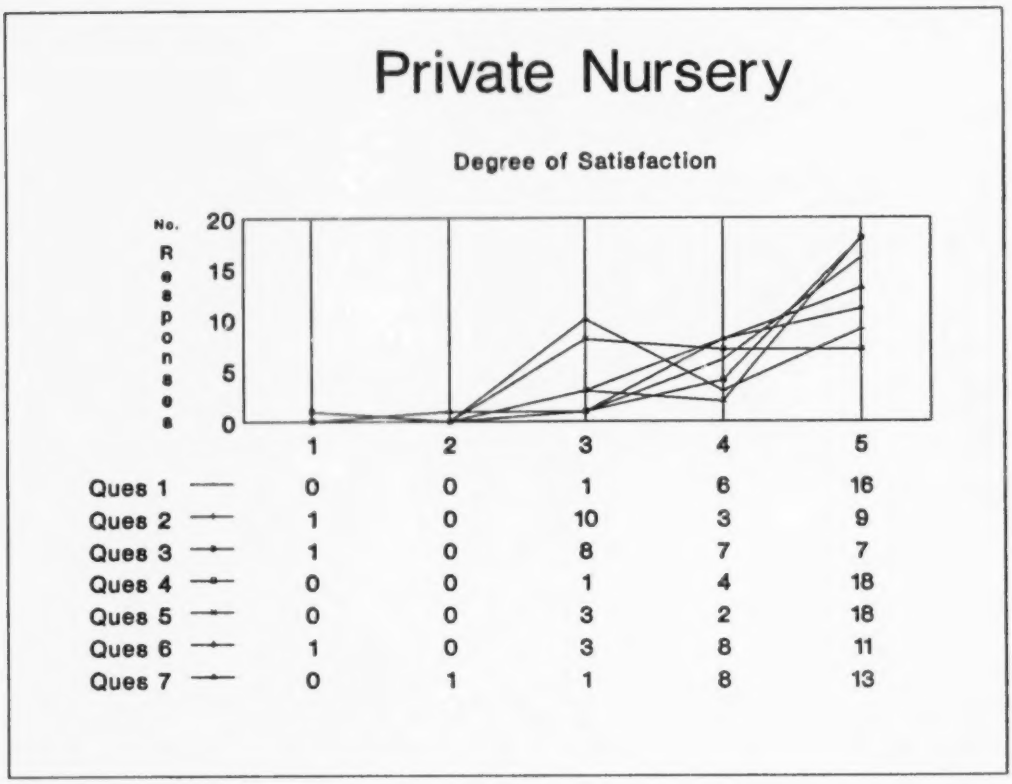
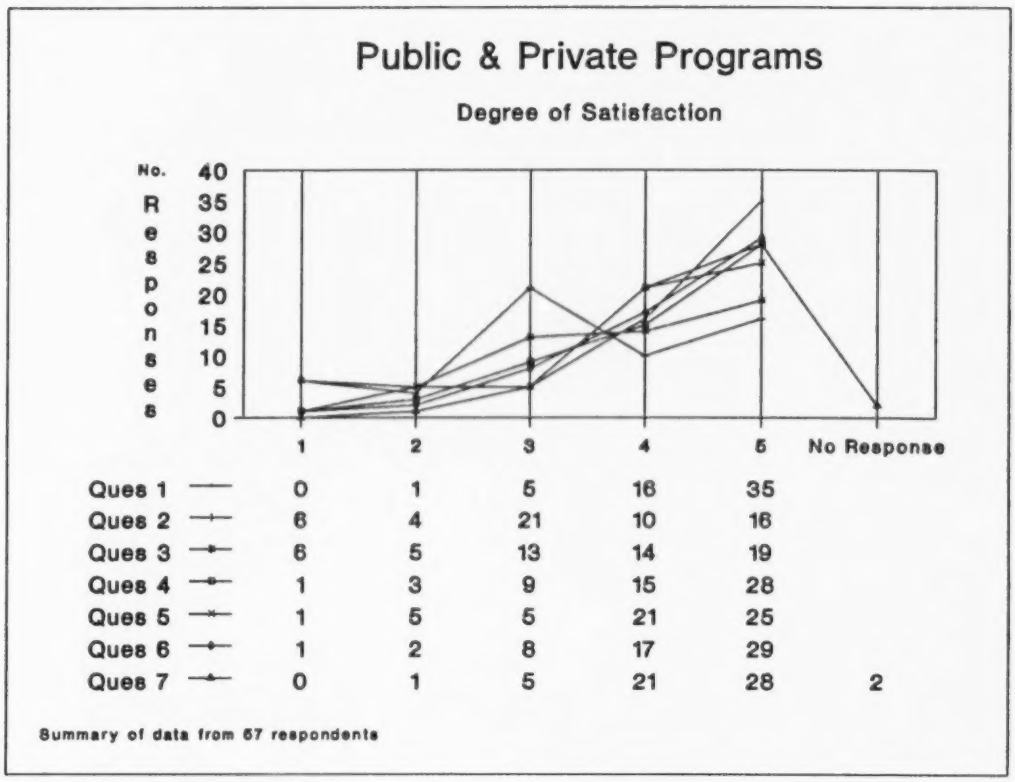

Private Nursery
Degree of Satisfaction
No. Responses
20
15
10
5
0
1
2
3
4
5
Ques 1 0 0 1 6 16
Ques 2 1 0 10 3 9
Ques 3 1 0 8 7 7
Ques 4 0 0 1 4 18
Ques 5 0 0 3 2 18
Ques 6 1 0 3 8 11
Ques 7 0 1 1 8 13

Table 10



	1	2	3	4	5	No Response
Ques 1	0	1	5	16	35	
Ques 2	6	4	21	10	16	
Ques 3	6	5	13	14	19	
Ques 4	1	3	9	15	28	
Ques 5	1	5	5	21	25	
Ques 6	1	2	8	17	29	
Ques 7	0	1	5	21	28	2

Summary of data from 57 respondents